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Feeling on an Island

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California State University, Monterey Bay

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Feeling on an Island



Photo by: K3win

Nima Godusi

Senior Capstone

Practical and Professional Ethics

Creative Project/ Creative Fiction Story

Dr. Qun Wang

Division of Humanities and Communications

Fall 2016

Dedication

Thank you to everyone in the International Programs office for helping me mature into a young responsible adult. Also like to thank Aki Kurosawa for helping achieve goals I didn't think were possible and helping transform me into a kinder person. And last but not least I would like to thank my mother, because without her help I would have never came to CSUMB and I would have never finished my degree. Thank you.

Acknowledgements

Dr. Qun Wang for inspiring me to strive for something more than just a bachelor's, and believing that I am capable of much more. Dr. Debian Marty for helping me ignite my passion of Ethics and helping me understand how to put ethical theories into real life situations. Dr. Patrick Belanger for teaching me skills that will help me with graduate level work and for always making me check what I say before saying it. And finally, Dr. Ajit Abraham for teaching me about how powerful knowledge is and teaching me about learning about your community and helping that community.

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Capstone Proposal

1. Name and area of concentration

- Nima Godusi
- PPE (Practical and Professional Ethics)

2. Capstone Title:

- Feeling on an Island

3. Project Description:

- I plan on writing a creative fictional story of a teenage boy who feels conflicted about telling his family news that goes against their culture and is not of the family norm.
- I wish to try and implement a scenario that has someone having an identity crisis and trying to overcome outside forces to become who they are as a person.
- I want to bring to light about how certain cultures and how they implement some of their practices might have a negative effect on their children.
- My point is to not say that these cultures are bad or how they raise their kids is wrong, but instead try to inform other groups on how some cultures that have a negative reputation are not all bad.

4. Alignment with Common Theme:

- Racial Identity and how certain cultures deal with different types of issues involving racial identity.

5. Expectations:

- The expectation I have with my story is to teach people about how much a family's culture and ideals can impose on someone being who they truly believe they are, and not letting the guilt of having your family prevent you from being yourself.
- Also to inform people on cultures that are misrepresented from either movies, tv, or based off of stories.

6. Specific Skills Required:

- I plan on showcasing my skills of detailed research and sensitivity of the culture that will be presented in the story.
- Also having very accurate ideals of that culture and someone of that race would deal with that specific situation.
- Lastly, I will use creative/ social action writing skills that I learned from Dr. Diana Garcia's class.

7. Next Steps:

- Meet with a variety of different individuals who are a part of the specific culture so that I will not misrepresent in my paper.
- Also read about the culture and how they would handle something in the past compared to modern day.
- Have different faculty members checking my work to see if there's anything I could improve on about my project.
- I will try to see how everyone views this specific culture and try to answer some of the questions people may have about them.

- **8. Timeline:**
- October 10th first draft completed
- November 1st second draft
- November 15th final draft
- December 5th poster done

Title and Abstract

Feeling on an Island.

I am writing a creative story about a middle eastern teenager who is struggling with his identity. He is homosexual but has a hard time fully accepting it because of how his father/family feel about homosexuality. My

story will be about this boy trying to figure away to tell his family/father that he is gay, but during the story he will be learning how society (college roommates) treat him for being gay. The transformation of a boy who is scared and does not think it is right to be gay from how he was raised to loving himself and figuring out who he is and what his identity is.

Feeling on an Island

Muhammad was a first generation American, his parents are both from Pakistan. He was a just like any other teenage American boy.

Muhammad enjoyed spending time with friends and baking desserts for his

family. His family was very traditional, they prayed frequently, attended mosque, and was always in his business. He lived with his father, mother, grandmother, older sister, and his two younger brothers. Muhammad loved his family very much and they loved him back, but there was 1 issue he had with them... They were extremely homophobic. Why did Muhammad have a issue with this, because he was in fact gay himself.

He had been attracted to men for as long as he could remember, but was always afraid of coming out because of his family's attitude towards gay people. He grew up in a upper-middle class neighborhood in Chicago, Illinois. All throughout his high school days he wanted to tell his parents that he was gay, but he was afraid that him being attracted to men was only a phase. He was convinced that's what his family would say also and he did not want his family to treat him differently if he wasn't 100% sure. The fear of possibly getting over this "phase" held him back from being honest with his family at a pivotal time in his life.

Muhammad was starting college and thought that this would be a good chance to figure himself out. This is the place someone could be who

they are without being judged, at least that's what he thought. All his life he had hear about how great college was and how college was the place where they learned their true identity. For someone who was suffering from an identity crisis college would be the perfect place to "find himself." When moving day arrived he met his roommate, a lanky black boy who had gotten into the university off of sports scholarship, Hakeem. To Muhammad's surprise he and Hakeem shared a lot in common, both were raised with a large family, both of their families were very religious, and both families were always in everyone's business. Muhammad thought that him being roomed with Hakeem was perfect, they were so similar maybe he could help with figuring out how he could come out to his family.

When Muhammad first told Hakeem that he was homosexual he was shocked. "I'm not shocked because you are gay, I am shocked at how well you are at hiding it," he said. Hakeem went on to ask has he came out to anyone before or if he was the first. Muhammad reluctantly admitted that he was the first he told, and that he would really appreciate it if he wouldn't tell anyone. He wasn't even 100% sure why he told Hakeem his secret in

the first place. “Maybe I wanted to see how someone who was similar to me and my family maybe I could get some insight on what kind of reaction someone would get. He felt relieved that Hakeem didn’t take the news so harshly, or at least that’s what he had thought. Muhammad later found out that Hakeem had submitted a request to get a new roommate. This news was something Muhammad was not expecting, when he approached Hakeem for the reason his response was a very weak excuse. “I thought I should room with one of my teammates so our we can perform better... don’t worry this has nothing to do because you are gay.” Him being gay wasn’t even why he asked, because he had totally forgotten about telling him in the first place but when he said that he knew that him being gay was the only reason why he wanted a new roommate. When Muhammad’s new roommate arrived it was a white boy from Oklahoma, Muhammad thought that they would never get along. Tim was his name, and he was a student on an academic scholarship. He was the type of person that didn’t like wasting time on things that he deemed unnecessary. When he was getting

settled in Muhammad asked some questions trying to see what type of person Tim was.

“What’s your major, do you like sports, do you practice religion, do you have a girlfriend, and since I have never met anyone from the midwest what is your opinion of gay people?” Tim replied, “Computer Science is my major, since I am from Oklahoma I am a die hard football fan, I am christian, no I do not, and although being gay is an abomination I personally do not care about them. The way I see it is 1 gay man equals 1 less person crowding up heaven.”

After these questions Muhammad wasn’t too sure what to think of his new roommate, and since he did not have much luck telling Hakeem about him being gay he decided he would most likely not tell Tim. Muhammad and Tim were roommates for 2 years and they grew to be very close friends, despite having different interests and personalities. Eventually, Muhammad began to trust Tim and thought that he wouldn’t care if he was gay, nothing would change I am exactly who I was 10 seconds before telling him. When he told Tim there was a moment of silence and Tim

walked out. A couple hours passed before Tim returned, he said he went for a walk to clear his mind. He was confused why Muhammad would tell him he was gay after 2 years. Tim asked if the reason why was because he loved him, “No I just thought since we grew to be good friends I wanted to tell you this about myself.” To Muhammad’s surprise Tim did not care that he was gay, he said that whoever he was attracted to doesn’t conflict with the friend he has made. Muhammad was in awe, the roommate that he thought would never accept him being gay was dealing with it better than his previous roommate.

After this his experience with Tim, Muhammad was determined to let his family know. He decided after he graduated he would tell everyone so he could move on with his life with or without the support of his family. When the day came of graduation Muhammad reflected on his two most enlightening experiences, coming out to his roommates Hakeem and Tim. Although he had his first impressions of them they turned out to be different than what he expected. He realized that similar to how he assumed how people were based off of what he has heard from the media, people, and

books everyone is different and you should give people the benefit of the doubt. Muhammad sat his family down after graduation, he was telling them his plans for grad school even though they already knew. “Dad, Mom, Grandma, and everyone else thank you for supporting me my whole life and I appreciate every single one of you. There’s something I’ve been meaning to tell you all for a very long time.”

“You’re gay. Muhammad we have always known, and we do not care. Although we did not approve right away after some time we realized this is who you were and we still love you,” his father stated. With tears in his eyes Muhammad ran over and squeezed his dad with all his might. “I love you all so much, and I am sorry for not telling you all sooner. I was afraid you would reject me.” This shows that although some people might reject you or certain groups might think of you as an abomination, but there will always be people who are exceptions. Muhammad learned this lesson first hand and it will always be a part of him no matter what he does in life.

Reflection Essay

Over the few years I have attended CSUMB I have learned more about the world and more about myself, than in the previous 21 years before that. When I first moved to the Monterey County I had no drive, direction, or simply put any thought about my future. I had been fumbling through three different schools prior to CSUMB, and my whole goal when I started here was to get my degree in whatever and get out. What I didn't expect was falling in love with the major that I chose to try and graduate with, Human communications.

In HCOM classes the content mostly consists of group discussions, readings, and writing research papers. When I heard that was what HCOM was like I decided to give it a try, because writing papers was something I always felt comfortable at doing. In my first semester I took classes with Kristen LaFollette, Dr. Wang, and Meghan O'Donnell. Although I did not know what to expect from having these classes one thing I was sure of was

that I would enjoy the topics. I was taking cooperative argumentation with Professor Lafollete, California History with Professor O'Donnell, and I was taking Dr. Wang's Literature Film and Culture. I thought that taking these three courses would be fun because at the time I loved to argue with people for no good reason, I loved watching movies and thought I could get a different perspective, and California history could teach a few things about the new place where I would be spending the next few years.

I went into these classes only taking them because they were HCOM courses and because I thought the topics were interesting, what I did not expect was the amount I would learn in the short time I had spent while in the HCOM department. The teachers were all approachable and understanding. They would always encouraged people to speak up and give their own perspective on the topics that were being talked about, and I loved being apart of a class environment where people would genuinely listen to what you had to say. In that first semester is also where I figured out what I wanted to strive for in the future. Dr. Wang had such an impact on me I ended up taking 6 different classes with him over my years here at CSUMB. He is the reason that I have made the decision to attend graduate school and work towards my PhD to become a professor. Although those plans have been delayed temporarily, I will still go to him for guidance for

any issues I may encounter in the past. Being told in the past that college is where you meet people that will impact you in ways that will stick with you your entire life, I never believed that until I had met Dr. Wang and the other HCOM faculty.

I believe the MLO system is not bad but I feel that it forces students to take courses they do not care about. Hoping that they learn something they would not normally learn in a class that they had an alternative choice of is a positive. The issue is not every student is capable of realizing another piece of knowledge that could benefit them in a way. They are to hesitant to open up to the experience and taking advantage of what they are getting. I had to take creative writing to fulfill an MLO requirement and I had the pleasure of it being taught by Dr. Diana Garcia. It was her final semester before retiring and she was as demanding as the rumors made her out to be. This level of demand for revisions and quality of work helped force me to take my writing seriously because they were my very own words and people would use those words to hold me accountable.

One year after starting here at CSUMB I had experienced different Professors who taught different subjects and taught in different styles. A few were very difficult, for example Dr. Berteaux Film and Philosophy course, and going against Dr. Wang's advice to steer clear of his classes I

believed that I could take the challenge head on.... I was wrong and I ended up receiving my worse grade at CSUMB. Although I was frustrated it taught me a valuable lesson, not everyone in HCOM is going to challenge you to push yourself hard. Dr. Berteaux gave that grade but to this day whenever I see him around I say hello to him and we have small talk, he did not give that grade because he disliked me he simply gave it to me because that was the grade he believed I had deserved.

A similar professor that has been a difficult challenge was Dr. Belanger's class. I am taking his Interracial Communications class this semester and it was a very enriching course, but I hadn't had a professor that asked some of the questions that he was asking. He pushed students out of their comfort zone without making a bad learning environment. Dr. Belanger was nothing like any other HCOM professor I have had in the past, and to be honest he frightened me at first. One of the most enjoyable parts about Dr. Belanger's class was the constant response that he would give to a student's comments on a topic, "sure." Internally I would laugh whenever he said sure because I knew that he didn't care too much about what the student was saying, but more of the evidence that was behind the comment. To me learning about more research based writing over personal

experience and research really taught me how to create graduate level papers and I am indebted to him for that.

Another professor I took this semester was Dr. Abraham. I had heard about him and had met him while working at the international programs office but I had never taken a course taught by him. I was told by a fellow HCOM student to take a class of his before I graduate, and luckily he was teaching a course that I needed for graduation. I took his HCOM 403 course which was ethical issues. Going into the class I had an idea of what topics we would talk about over the semester, pro choice, fracking, etc... In many HCOM courses we talk about the same topics frequently, but Dr. Abraham had a bit of twist. It wasn't just what we thought about the subject or our opinions about the chapter we had to read. Instead we did not just talk about the subject or the different perspectives, but we explored even further into the subject into areas I personally did not consider when reading the book. He had a knack for getting students, at least myself, to push past the limits of their understanding of the subject. Dr. Abraham has helped me further evolve my critical thinking skills when it comes to controversial topics, and I am truly thankful that I had the pleasure of having him as one of my professors.

A similar ethics professor who had an impact on my way of thinking is Dr. Debian Marty. I took her Relational Ethics course and we focused primarily on three different topics; Forgiveness, Lying, and Compassion. She forced me to really think about my everyday decisions and if I thought I was living a life that I believed to be ethical. I really had to examine things without bias and this exercise really helped me improve my way of living and how I wanted to live my life. One major thing that happened was for my final project I decided to go to someone and ask for forgiveness for a lie that I told them in order to gain some type of benefit. In the past I had never apologized to someone who I believed I would never encounter in my life again, and that is why I decided to do it for my final project. I was terrified because of how new the experience was for me, but it taught me a valuable lesson about how even though we are desperate lying does not need to be the solution. I thank Dr. Marty because she was a funny, understanding, and powerful professor. She was the type of professor I would love to grab some coffee with and talk, and I only have that feeling with a few professors.

I had taken courses other than HCOM but they didn't have a lasting impact on me that I could look back on. After taking all those courses with Dr. Wang hearing him talk about how HCOM is a growing major and how

large it was, I never truly believed him. I thought it was just students trying to graduate with a degree in something they considered easy, but in my opinion I think that majority of those students realized everything they had gained from HCOM and all these wonderful professors. In my honest opinion I truly think that this program would not be what is without the amazing faculty that have gathered here to teach us skills that we can translate to many different fields of society. Dr. Wang, Dr. Marty, Dr. Belanger, and Dr. Abraham have all taught me the most. What I mean by taught me the most is that I can look back and distinctly remember what they taught and the skills and techniques I have learned from them. These 4 professors are some of if not the top HCOM professors here at CSUMB. And that is not just a personal opinion that is fact. Expressing in words is something I could never do to show the level of gratitude I have for these professors. They helped an angry, confused, and thick-headed kid into someone who cares about the environment and instead of reacting of pure emotion, uses judgement and skills to assess issues I am faced with. If I had the money I would take all of them out to a nice restaurant, but I will just have to wait until I receive my PhD..

Synthesis Essay

Almost every human communications major here at CSUMB has either taken one of Dr. Wang's courses or heard of them. I had the pleasure this semester to have him as my instructor for Capstone. When the semester started I wasn't too sure what to expect since all I have heard is how difficult or how stressful Capstone is from former communications students. Sure enough Dr. Wang started Capstone just like any other of his courses, he gave us a few statistics and a few of his famous quotes. He then gave us an overview of what will be doing in his class and important dates and deadlines. I noticed many of my peers in that class from other previous classes which made the class environment much more comfortable. Since the environment was comfortable from the start we did not need to waste time trying to have people open up during class opinions or discussions. We would spend a couple hours of class watching films that dealt with our class theme; self-identity. From "The Color Purple" Directed by Steven Spielberg with award winning actors/actresses such as Whoopi Goldberg, Oprah Winfrey, and Danny Glover. This film taught a specific type of self-identity, believing in oneself and confidence. Throughout the film the main character was treated as if she had no other option but to listen to what everyone told her what to do all because she was considered ugly. She struggled with figuring out who she was because all her life she

was told she was good for nothing and wouldn't amount to anything because she was ugly. Anytime she would have an opinion or have something to say she would be shut down or laughed at because everyone thought of her in a negative light. Eventually she found out who she was and lived a good life in the end. This film gave us a different type of perspective to self-identity that may be different for students original idea of self-identity.

Next film we watched was "Come see the Paradise" which was about an American who falls in love with a first-generation Japanese girl. Unlike "The Color Purple" the characters knew who they were which conflicted with how others thought they should be. This film taught me about believing in oneself and not letting outside forces dictate my actions which gave me the inspiration for what I wanted to do for my Capstone. The final film we watched was "Real Women have Curves" which is about mexican-american girl who has a strong will and does not let anyone talk negatively about her. Her strong will gets her in trouble, most of the time with her mother who is always telling her she is fat and looks ugly for it. The interaction between these two helped me with how I wanted to have my characters interact with each other since the cultures are similar.

We watched and learned about different types of issues involving self-identity to give us multiple ways of thinking about our topic. This helped spark some ideas for students, including myself, on what they wanted to write about for their Capstone. To me, this was a good way on how to get people started who were not too sure about what to write about. All the movies had issues that were relatable for anyone who has dealt with self-identity. It showed different races, genders, time periods, and situations which helped show all the possibilities of what someone could write about in their Capstone. After watching these films it helped me personally feel stronger about whether my paper would be considered appropriate. Dr. Wang made himself available for anyone at any time. He helped everyone a lot with questions and concerns, and gave everyone the advice they needed to finish their papers to the best of their abilities.

I am thrilled about the results of my hard work over the semester when it comes to my Capstone. I believe that the topic was perfect for the type of final project I wanted to do in my last HCOM course, and to have it with the man who helped me get to where I am at today was ideal. Self-Identity was a topic I wanted to write about for a few semesters now, and the fact I got to do a creative project in Dr. Wang's class was something that made me very happy. Dr. Wang's teaching style was a strong way of

showing multiple viewpoints when it came to the diverse cultures that can suffer with self-identity. I think that not having class every week was a good touch because instead of being half asleep for the first 2 hours of the class, we had office hours during that time if someone needed any type of help. I would like to thank Dr. Wang and how he taught Capstone similar to any other course... happy, inspiring, and always with an energetic smile.